DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 042 184 CG 005 673

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TITLE A Study of Social Attitudes of Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Grade Pupils.
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PUB DATE 67
NOTE 18p.

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$1.00
DESCRIPTORS Academic Achievement, *Attitudes, *Elementary School Students, Interpersonal Competence, Social Attitudes, Social Characteristics, *Social Development, Social Environment, Socialization, Social Values

ABSTRACT

The study sought to discover the relationship, if any, between children with certain academic backgrounds and the attitudes generally considered most vital in a democracy. Attitudes were categorized into five behavioral areas: (1) democratic living; (2) group interdependence; (3) empathy; (4) independent thinking; and (5) social responsibility. These were selected from a review of the pertinent literature and formed the basis for developing a scale of social attitudes. Two hundred and forty-five fourth, fifth and sixth grade students comprised the sample to which the scale was administered. Significant differences in attitude scores were sought by isolating the children's sex, I.Q., achievement level and grade level as independent variables. Achievement level was found to be significant, with high achievers showing higher favorable attitude scores. Of all five areas probed, independent thinking was consistently the lowest positive attitude score. The suggestion was made that this condition might be rectified by the inclusion of more heuristic school activities. A copy of the scale is appended. (TL)

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Abstract

This study compared the positive social attitude scores, of 245 fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students, based on an attitude questionnaire consisting of fifty items. These items were included in the following social attitude areas: social responsibility, independent thinking, democratic living, empathy, and group cooperation. Significant differences in attitude scores were sought by isolating the child's sex, I. Q., achievement level and grade level as independent variables. The only significant variable found in the study was the comparison of students with above and below average achievement at each grade level, with sex and I. Q. being the control variables. However, the study could not determine whether a child's attitudes result in higher school achievement or the reverse. Another finding was that independent thinking had the lowest total positive attitude score at each grade level. The suggestion was made that this condition might be improved if school personnel offered more heuristic activities to children on a daily basis.

CG 005 673

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A Study of Social Attitudes of Fourth, Fifth & Sixth Grade Pupils

The attitudes of the children of the next generation will be of great significance in determining the future of this country. Therefore attitudes should be of great concern to this country's educators. If we find that a relationship exists between attitudes held by children, and certain easily identifiable variables, this may give us clues regarding areas of particular need for educational programs designed to modify or reinforce attitudes.

The main purpose of this study was to discover by developing a scale of social attitudes any relationships between certain backgrounds of children, and some of the attitudes perhaps generally considered most vital in a democracy. Attitudes in the study were categorized within the following behavioral areas: democratic living, group interdependence, empathy, independent thinking, and social responsibility.

The five behavioral areas selected for this study were derived from the several sources that advocated the school's use of attitudes considered the most vital in a democracy. Hunnicutt listed seven basic behavioral schemes. These schemes included: (1) People's manner of living is a product of environmental interaction, (2) In search of progress, people have built a constantly changing panorama of culture and civilization, (3) People work, invent, and build to satisfy their changing needs and desires, (4) People strive

for order and justice through law and government, (5) Through sharing experiences, people learn to live together, (6) People need enrichment for their daily existence and (7) People increasingly recognize their interdependence with all mankind, and must share responsibility for the general welfare.[1] The Social Studies Curriculum Center of Syracuse University stressed five value attitude areas. These attitude areas include: (1) The Dignity of Man or the need for students to respect the individual rights of others, (2) Empathy, which can't be just taught, but taught and practiced as a behavioral value, so that students that accept this value will practice it, (3) Loyality, or the learning of which loyalties are right and which are wrong, and how to test, effectively, certain positive loyalties to one's people and country, (4) Government by the Consent of the Governed, which would overlap with the previous mentioned attitude areas, and (5) Freedom and Equality, which also overlaps with the above attitude areas, and includes knowledge and practice of freedom with responsibility and respect for other's equality.[2] The Bureau of Curriculum Development of the New York State Education Department advocated the following key attitude areas: (1) Interdependence, whereby people become social through group life and shared experiences, (2) Adaptation-Conservation, in which people's lives are conditioned by their natural environment, (3) Cooperation, whereby people work together

to satisfy their needs and desires, (4) Democracy, where people try, through mutually accepted laws and organization, to gain justice and security, and (5) Progress, whereby people have struggled through time to achieve a better life.[3] Michaelis has also stressed the use of such attitude areas as interdependence, independent thinking, and other social skills development necessary to train children to live in a democracy.[4]

From the above sources of major attitude areas, the attitude areas of group cooperation, democratic living, independent thinking, empathy, and social responsibility have been selected for use in this study. Group cooperation is defined as expressed attitudes involving how well one feels about working with others. Democratic living is defined as attitudes in regard to favorable or unfavorable expressed feelings toward respect for other people's equal rights. Independent thinking is defined as attitudes expressive of one's desire to think on a more independent level. Empathy is defined as expressed attitudes relating to how well one person relates with another person's feelings. Social responsibility is defined as attitudes related to the child's respect for his individual obligations to obey the rules of the home, school, and community.

Method

A list of 50 positive attitude items were comprised that were relevant to each of the five attitude areas. Eighteen graduate students in education, with previous teaching experience at the elementary school level, were asked to place the 50 positive items under the 5 relevant attitude areas. Attitude statements that showed a very clear majority in their placement were retained. Those that did not have a clear majority were discarded and the 25 positive statements, five in each area, that were most consistently chosen made up the initial questionnaire. These 25 positive statements were also expressed in a negative manner so that the questionnaire contained 5 positive and 5 negative statements under each of the 5 attitude areas. This initial questionnaire was then administered to a sample 4th grade class and a final revision was made.[5]

The questionnaire was then administered to 70 fourth grade pupils, 87 fifth grade pupils, and 88 sixth grade pupils. Each of the three grades represented a wide range of I. Q. and achievement levels. The Lorge-Throndike Intelligence Test and Kuhlman-Anderson Achievement Test were the measuring instruments used in the study. The mean I. Q. for the three grades was 102 in fourth grade, 103 in fifth grade, and 106 in sixth grade. The mean achievement level was 3.8 in fourth grade, 4.8 in fifth grade, and 6.0 in sixth grade. The subjects were all from a lower-middle to upper-middle class

socio-economic level. The five positively-oriented and five negatively-oriented statements included in the questionnaire for each area were scattered throughout the questionnaire to avoid mechanical responses or possible halo effects.

The basic data consisted of the student's responses to the fifty items on the questionnaire. A five-point grading scale was used in computing the data. Positively-oriented statements were scaled from 1/ for strongly agree, 2/ mildly agree, 3/ don't really care, 4/ mildly disagree, to 5/ strongly disagree. Negatively-oriented statements were scaled from 5/ for strongly disagree to 1/ for strongly agree. This was done so each negative statement was the reverse of each positive statement.

Results

A major hypothesis of the study was that students with above-average achievement would have significantly higher positive attitude scores than students with below-average achievement. Controlled variables were sex, I. Q. and grade level. The results of Table I support the hypothesis that students with above-average achievement at each grade level would have significantly higher favorable attitude scores than students with below-average achievement. Other hypotheses sought significant differences between students when either sex, I. Q. or grade level were considered the independent variables. In all cases, between sexes, grades, or I. Q. level, no significant differences were found between total positive attitude scores.

TABLE I

Comparison of Positive Attitude Scores Between Pupils of High and Low Achievement at Each Grade Level

Grade	N	High Achv't. $\bar{X}$	S.D.	Low Achv't. $\bar{X}$	S.D.	t
6 Girls	30	213	8	192	13	7 < .001
5 Girls	24	214	12	178	26	4.1 < .01
4 Girls	22	212	9	183	13	7.3 < .01
6 Boys	30	213	9	184	18	4.1 < .01
5 Boys	24	210	10	180	15	6 < .01
4 Boys	22	200	15	160	12	8 < .001

Table II compares the total weighted mean attitude scores, by each grade level. Of particular interest is the fact that independent thinking had the lowest favorable attitude score at each grade level. It's an interesting observation because many educational sources, found by the writer, claimed that critical or independent thinking was one of the major goals of elementary school programs.

TABLE II

Total Grade Weighted Mean Attitude Scores for Five Attitude Areas

Attitude Area	(N70) Grade 4	(N87) Grade 5	(N88) Grade 6
Group Cooperation	493	656	663
Empathy	559	694	748
Independent Thinking	462	597	609
Social Responsibility	567	685	715
Democratic Living	550	670	724
Average Grade Means	526	660	692
s. d.	41	34	50

Order of Attitude Areas, By Grade, From Most to Least Popular

Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6
Social Responsibility	Empathy	Empathy
Empathy	Social Responsibility	Democratic Living
Democratic Living	Democratic Living	Social Responsibility
Group Cooperation	Group Cooperation	Group Cooperation
Independent Thinking	Independent Thinking	Independent Thinking

Summary of Conclusions

This study tested the relationship between the positive attitudes expressed by nine-to-eleven-year-old children in fourth grades through sixth grades compared with the student's sex, I. Q. achievement, and grade level. The only significant relationship found was between students of above- and below-average achievement at each grade level with I. Q. and sex being the controlled variables. Although Table I shows that students with above-average achievement had significantly higher favorable attitude scores than students with below-average achievement at each grade level, the study did not disclose whether the student's high achievement caused a high positive attitude score, or if the reverse was true. Future studies could apply the same questionnaire on a pre-test and post-test basis, using a variety of methods or techniques.

Another result of the study showed no significant relationship between sexes of children, children of above- and below-average I. Q. levels, or children of different grade levels when the variables of sex, I. Q. and achievement were held constant. This offers an opportunity for a future study to add a variable consisting of various teacher personalities and their possible influence on pupil attitude change in their classrooms.

It was also mentioned that of the five attitude areas, independent thinking had the lowest positive attitude score at each grade level. This would seem to imply that a more positive attitude could result in this area if classroom teachers planned and encouraged more daily heuristic activities for their children.

At the present time, this attitude questionnaire is being utilized in over 50 fifth grade teachers in conjunction with the use of a new course--Jerome Bruner's Man: A Course of Study--to determine what, if any, attitude changes can be found by the end of the school year in comparison to the results of student reactions to the questionnaire prior to undertaking the new study.

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3. Michaelis, John U., Social Studies for Children in a Democracy, New York, Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1950, 466 pp.

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INSTRUCTIONS: After you read each statement carefully, check one of the boxes at the right that tells how you feel about each statement.

APPENDIX II

NOTE: Blank spaces left in questionnaire implies that the scoring, from left to right boxes, is 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5

Dave Zodikoff
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	strongly disagree	mildly disagree	don't really care	mildly agree	strongly agree
1. I would usually prefer to work with others than to work alone.					
2. I feel sorry when someone is treated unfairly.					
3. I like to try to solve new problems by myself.					
4. I usually report students who have broken school rules.					
5. I think other people should have the same rights as I do.					
6. The friends I like best are the ones who think the way I do.	5	4	3	2	1
7. I wish some of my classmates had nicer homes and clothes.					
8. I become very nervous when I can't find quick answers to problems.	5	4	3	2	1
9. I try to tell my friends to obey school laws.					
10. I think a citizen should obey all laws.					
11. I want some friends who think differently from me.					
12. I like to help other children having trouble with school work.					
13. I like a teacher always to tell me just how to do things.	5	4	3	2	1
14. I obey signs that tell me to stay off someone's property.					

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	strongly disagree	mildly disagree	don't really care	mildly agree	strongly agree
15. I would rather be told what rules to obey, than have to help in making up rules.	5	4	3	2	1
16. I usually prefer to work alone rather than with others.	5	4	3	2	1
17. I am sorry for children who work hard in school and still get low marks.					
18. I like it when the teacher lets us search in books for hard answers.					
19. I only obey laws that I like.	5	4	3	2	1
20. I like it when my teacher lets us help to make class rules.					
21. Group work is more interesting than working alone.					
22. It doesn't bother me when someone else is treated unfairly.	5	4	3	2	1
23. I like to take toys apart to see how they work.					
24. I often like to do things behind the teacher's back.	5	4	3	2	1
25. I like it when I have more freedom than my classmates.	5	4	3	2	1
26. I like playing games alone rather than with others.	5	4	3	2	1
27. When someone loses a game to me, I like to tell him how I played better.	5	4	3	2	1
28. I like to try to solve hard puzzles.					

	strongly disagree	mildly disagree	don't really care	mildly agree	strongly agree
29. It's usually alright to cheat if you don't get caught.	5	4	3	2	1
30. I think a good leader is one who does the things I like.	5	4	3	2	1
31. I like to play in team games rather than play alone.					
32. When someone loses a game to me, I usually tell him how well he played.					
33. I don't enjoy working at hard puzzles.	5	4	3	2	1
34. I usually try to obey rules.					
35. My teacher and parents should try to teach me to be fair with other people.					
36. I think it's more important to be the star player than to try to help my team win.	5	4	3	2	1
37. I don't like children who don't have as nice homes or clothes as I do.	5	4	3	2	1
38. I don't like to make up poems or draw pictures.	5	4	3	2	1
39. I don't care if other children break school rules.	5	4	3	2	1
40. A good leader must want to be fair with everyone.					
41. I like to share my ideas with others in group work.					
42. I'm glad when other children get lower marks in school than I.	5	4	3	2	1

	strongly agree	mildly agree	don't really care	mildly disagree	strongly disagree
43. The only children I try to be fair with are my friends.	1	2	3	4	5
44. I think that many children should have beliefs different from mine.					
45. I like it when my teacher treats me better than my classmates.	1	2	3	4	5
46. I think it's more important to help my team win than to try to be the star of the team.					
47. I only like to help children who are my close friends.	1	2	3	4	5
48. Other children's rights are not as important as mine.	1	2	3	4	5
49. I only obey my parents when I like what they ask me to do.	1	2	3	4	5
50. I usually don't like to share my ideas with others.	1	2	3	4	5

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List of Major Behavioral Areas and Related Attitude Statements

The number preceding each attitude statement denotes its position on the questionnaire.

Group Cooperation

Attitude statement

1. I would usually prefer to work with others than to work alone.

21. Group work is more interesting than working alone.

31. I like to play in team games rather than to play alone.

41. I like to share my ideas with others in group work.

46. I think it's more important to help my team win than to try to be the star of the team.

16. I usually prefer to work alone rather than with others.

26. I like playing games alone rather than with others.

36. I think it's more important to be the star player than to try to help my team win.

50. I usually don't like to share my ideas with others.

15. I would rather be told what rules to obey, than have to help in making up rules.

Empathy

Attitude statement

2. I feel sorry when someone is treated unfairly.

7. I wish some of my classmates had nicer homes and clothes.

12. I like to help other children having trouble with schoolwork.

17. I am sorry for children who work hard in school and still get low marks.

32. When someone loses a game to me, I usually tell him how well he played.

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22. It doesn't bother me when someone else is treated unfairly.

27. When someone loses a game to me, I like to tell him how I played better.

37. I don't like children who don't have as nice homes or clothes as I do.

42. I'm glad when other children get lower marks in school than I.

47. I only like to help children who are my close friends.

Independent Thinking

Attitude statement

3. I like to try to solve new problems by myself.

11. I want some friends who think differently from me.

18. I like it when the teacher lets us search in books for hard answers.

23. I like to take toys apart to see how they work.

28. I like to try to solve hard puzzles.

6. The friends I like best are the ones who think the way I do.

8. I become very nervous when I can't find quick answers to problems.

13. I like a teacher always to tell me just how to do things.

33. I don't enjoy working at hard puzzles.

38. I don't like to make up poems or draw pictures.

Social Responsibility

Attitude statement

4. I usually report students who have broken school rules.

9. I try to tell my friends to obey school laws.

10. I think a citizen should obey all laws.

14. I obey laws that I like.

34. I usually try to obey rules.

19. I only obey laws that I like.

24. I often like to do things behind the teacher's back.

29. It's usually alright to cheat if you don't get caught.

39. I don't care if other children break school rules.

49. I only obey my parents when I like what they ask me to do.

Democratic Living

Attitude statement

5. I think other people should have the same rights as I do.

20. I like it when my teacher lets us help make class rules.

35. My teacher and parents should try to teach me to be fair with other people.

40. A good leader must want to be fiar with everyone.

44. I think that many children should have beliefs different from mine.

25. I like it when I have more freedom than my classmates.

30. I think a good leader is one who does the things I like.

45. I like it when my teacher treats me better than my classmates.

43. The only children I try to be fair with are my friends.

48. Other children's rights are not as important as mine.